

WASHINGTON, D.C.--Congressman Jeff Fortenberry's amendment to prohibit U.S. military assistance to the African nation of Chad for its continued use of child soldiers was approved by the House of Representatives early this morning for inclusion with H.R. 1, the FY11 House continuing resolution.

"I am pleased that Congress acted this morning to make it clear to Chad that the United States will not continue to tolerate their use of child soldiers," said Fortenberry. "Chad is a valuable military partner. But using children as soldiers is wrong, and we declared in 2008 that children belong on playgrounds, not battlegrounds. To strengthen a meaningful partnership with Chad, the horrific abuse of children must end.

"William Wilberforce, the British statesman and unyielding abolitionist for whom our anti-human trafficking law is named, said, 'You may choose to look the other way but you can never say again that you did not know.'

"We are making it clear to the government of Chad that we now know. And we cannot look the other way."

In 2008, Congress passed the Fortenberry-authored *Child Soldiers Prevention Act* as part of the *William Wilberforce Human Trafficking Victims Protection Act*

. This bill declared that the US would not provide military assistance to countries found guilty of child conscription. The government of Chad, a military partner to which the U.S. provides assistance, was found guilty of using child soldiers in the 2010 State Department Trafficking-in-Persons Report. However, as the law provided, Chad was granted a national security interest waiver with the hopes that Chad would take serious strides toward ending this human rights violation.

With the withdrawal of the UN mission in Chad at the end of 2010, children as young as 13 are being preyed upon as child soldiers. In this past week, the United Nations and a respected international human rights organization both issued reports warning of Chad's continued flouting of our law. International media outlets have given attention to this issue in recent days.

Fortenberry is the Vice Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights. ###